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PROFESSIONAL TRAINING AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT*

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This discussion limits itself to the point of view of a teacher in a school of social work, regarding professional training for child welfare. The need for clarity as to what child welfare is must be recognized.

IT is significant that there are now a number of Child Welfare League committees working in various parts of the country on further clarification of what constitutes child welfare. As the minutes of one committee state, "the term child welfare is an unsatisfactory one, for it is too inclusive; it might be applied to any medical or educational or social service program for the well-being of children. In current usage, however, the application is limited to the work of certain agencies which deal with specific problems affecting children. Only by examining the activities actually carried on by these agencies can we arrive at an accurate definition of the term in its specific meaning."

The basic difference between inservices training and professional training for social work, is that the goal of the former is continuously improved performance on a particular job and of the latter the development of a professional person who will be able to apply his acquired knowledge and skills in a variety of settings within his general area of competence. This discussion of the professional curriculum which is a joint enterprise between school and agency (though the school as an educational institution carries the heavier end) is going to consider the following facets: selection of students, child welfare's stake in curriculum planning in relation to the demands on the future worker to provide agency services and ways in which the school works with the agency in achieving common goals.

The Selection of Trainees

What about selection of trainees from the ever-growing number we hope to interest in our profession as a career? At present, although we have developed some techniques in this area, are we not operating to a great extent on the basis of hunches rather than on the basis of clear-cut criteria arrived at more scientifically? For the most part we go by the college transcripts, reflecting a considerable range of educational standards; references selected by the applicant and from persons differing widely in background and particularly in their knowledge of what we are look-

ing for; interviews whose techniques are frequently taken over bodily from casework practice without appropriate adaptation and autobiographies for which the applicants are often given little direction and which vary greatly in pertinent content. There seems to be a healthy recognition of these limitations. For example* the New York School is studying the matter of interviews at the point of admission and the Minnesota School is trying out a battery of tests.

Florence T. Waite in her paper on "Selection of Scholarship Students,"† has discussed very ably the kind of applicants we need to encourage. While this material was prepared with the family casework field in mind, we as child welfare workers can wholeheartedly endorse the criteria stated with a plea for more emphasis at certain points. We are convinced that it is *not* that the future child welfare worker should bring to training qualities different in kind, but because of the nature of her task that we must ask that certain qualities shall exist to an even higher degree. For the most part, the child welfare worker is dealing with children threatened by separation having to go through the process or already living apart from their families. Thus, even when commitment is not involved, the agency through the worker assumes greater responsibility for the life of the individual child than in most other fields and therefore the worker has an even greater need to maintain her own emotional balance in situations likely to be as highly tense as a court hearing when the child is, so to speak, "on the block" between father and mother and/or the agency.

While child welfare workers are slowly and painfully giving up the illusion that being a child welfare worker more or less means putting the parents in the shadow, taking over the role of the parent, it is still true that working with children living away from their own parents entails a marked degree of ability to understand and meet the needs of these children on their own level. Moreover in order to have the proper perspective on disturbed situations, the

* See also "The Selection and Admission of Students in a School of Social Work," by Margaret E. Bishop, Pennsylvania School of Social Work, 1948.

† Journal of Social Case Work, Vol. XXVIII, No. 9, November, 1947.

worker has to know a great deal about the growth and development of children. Imagination and creativity are musts for those who work as consistently and directly with children as does the child welfare worker.

Furthermore the unique role of the child welfare worker with reference to the basic casework tenet of the client's right of self-determination deserves emphasis. The application of this principle calls for much sensitivity as to the degree of responsibility which a child, and particularly one in distress, can and should be asked to assume. There are frequently occasions, and not only with delinquent children, when the worker in order to be most helpful to the child must uphold certain values and take a course of action which holds a child to certain responsibilities. It is essential therefore that the future child welfare worker be particularly secure so that she can make constructive use of authority.

Child Welfare Worker's Stake in Curriculum

This topic could itself provide more than sufficient material for a whole paper. For an over-all discussion I suggest Sue Spencer's inclusive and thoughtful paper on "Major Issues in Social Work Education." One thing that will impress the reader more than anything else is her statement, "Social work education reflects—and properly so—the youth of the profession: its sudden enthusiasms, its relatively uncrystallized practice in certain areas and its unsureness of itself. Youth is a great asset, but maturity is undoubtedly more comfortable. We sometimes long for the time when the profession will be 'more settled' in its knowledge of its responsibilities and when we in education will know with assurance what it is for which we are preparing people."*

One of the problems which has great practical current significance for child welfare and the other specialized fields, and which might be termed the "new look" in social work education—or is it really so new?—is the discussion concerning generic and specialized content in the professional curriculum that is going strong both among school faculties and practitioners at this time. As a matter of fact, are we even agreed on what we mean by generic and specialized? One fairly recent report appears to limit the term generic to the *common core of casework content* whereas another takes issue with this interpretation and indicates the need for more study to determine the nature

of the *basic core of content for all social workers*. This report states further that a more adequate integration of social and cultural content into the curriculum is called for and (child welfare workers should take particular notice) that there should be more emphasis on what group living and other group experiences mean to the individual. No doubt such discussions as these are healthy and in line with the present state of social work education. They suggest the need to arrive at some common agreement before instituting basic changes that will stand the test of better service to clients.

On the basic course content as worked out by the American Association of Schools of Social Work for the first year curriculum there seems to be common agreement, although the question might be raised as to the one-year educational leave a student needs for a specialized course in his field. It is when we consider what additional content is necessary that the ways begin to part. The dilemma we are faced with here seems to derive mainly from two realities:

1. The limitation in time in the present two-year training program and what can soundly be taught within such a short period;
2. The dearth of trained workers, which puts those who have just completed their training in the dangerous position of having to assume heavy responsibilities, yes, often also leadership, which presupposes not only considerable maturity but also great skill in a particular field.

But even if and when these stark realities should eventually become modified, are there aspects of theory and practice which have particular relevance for our own field as others have for other fields and which demand not only a sound general knowledge and skills but also equally sound specialized knowledge and skills if a worker is to function with any degree of competence in a particular field?

As to the child welfare worker's special needs, we can give only a few examples here. First of all there is *home finding* in which the evidence for special skill lies before us in the perennial dearth of the resources without which there can be no placement service worthy of the name. Skill in this aspect of our work has implications not only for our own field but also for others using this type of placement such as workers with the aged and mental patients.

Then there is the unique relationship between foster parents and worker in which the worker must assume a teaching and supervisory role with all the subtle elements involved in such a relationship which aim at growth of the foster parent and thus more efficient service to the client we share. Have we not often tended in the past to see foster parents in the role of agency clients rather than to recognize that

* Sue Spencer, "Major Issues in Social Work Education," Proceedings National Conference of Social Work 1947, pp. 437 and 438.

they are giving a service which varies from that of the worker but which remains a service just the same. Also the foster home worker is the center of a very unusual constellation of child, parents, and foster parents. Child welfare workers are all too familiar with the tensions and problems so frequently found in foster care. It requires great casework skill to maintain that delicate balance. Evidence of lack of sufficient competence in these special areas of service is seen in the loss of many foster homes and in the number of replacements with their seriously damaging effects on children. Development of greater competence in these areas by the child welfare worker would improve not only work in foster homes for children but also related types of care such as foster homes for the aged and homemaker service.

And now we come to the children's institution, of all agencies the one most highly burdened with tradition. It has still hardly sloughed off the eggshell of custodial care. Indeed it is only beginning to be recognized for its unique contribution—an experience in group living to be used therapeutically for those children who are in need of such an experience and therefore can derive benefit from it. Since practically all students entering professional training bring with them many of the traditional concepts and attitudes, special effort must be made by the child welfare field to get this new concept regarding institutions into the bones and muscles of future workers so that they can contribute to the remodeling process. It is hoped that a better understanding of institutional care will be a part of the basic equipment of all social workers who use institutions of various kinds. However the caseworker who is one of the members of the institutional team is in a particularly difficult position. As the integrator of various and sundry services of the institution for the benefit of the individual child, she must not be (as too often in the past she has been) the prima donna who feels she has a corner on understanding the dynamics of child behavior. While it is true that she does have, by virtue of her training, something special and different to offer than the other members of the institutional staff, she is often sadly lacking in knowledge of the dynamics of group behavior and confused as to how to relate her responsibility as a caseworker to that of the rest of the staff.

Since we are beginning to see that foster homes and institutions are not competitive fields but that each be used in accordance with the needs of the individual child, child welfare workers should, through their training, have a thorough understanding of and sound attitudes toward both resources in order to use them discriminatingly.

Finally in all types of child placement there are skills involved in the handling of finances. While there is much for us to learn from the family field in which budgeting has long been an important item, we have been slow in getting away from our illusion that we "do not handle relief" in spite of the thousands of dollars invested in board payments, expenses for medical care, clothing and allowances. It is high time that we not only take over what the family field has to offer but go further in adapting the principles involved to the peculiar and rather subtle financial problems in our own field.

Ways in Which School Works with Agency

As we now approach the implications of all this discussion for the *professional curriculum* it is, as Sue Spencer says, "well to keep in mind that social work education in a peculiar sense is a joint enterprise engaging the school, the social agency and the student. It is, to a great extent dependent on the availability of agency programs of high quality and the supervisory skill and time of agency staff members,"* and may we add on a high quality of classroom teaching and sound continuous integration of class and field work experience through planned interchange between student, field instructor and faculty member.

We see the *academic curriculum* as providing first of all a broad platform of generic content for all students whatever their eventual field training, agency and specialized interest. In the second place we see branching off from this common base the major avenues of casework, group work, community organization and administration which make use of basic understanding in various ways.

Last but not least, we see every student having an opportunity to refine his equipment in certain specialized areas of professional functioning, depending upon his interests. For the child welfare worker, this means acquiring a deeper knowledge of, and greater competence in, the skills required in such areas as indicated earlier and probably many more areas† that we hope to identify through such efforts as those of the League Committees referred to previously.

It seems obvious that every teacher in professional social work education whether in the classroom or in the agency setting needs to approach his task of presenting specific content with breadth as well as

* Sue Spencer: *Ibid*, page 436.

† The special skills in adoption and protective services are not mentioned here. They are additional evidence of the validity of Professor Schulze's thesis.—Ed.

with depth. As far as the individual student is concerned, his personality, his background, his experience and his ultimate goals should be the determining factors in making out his program both at school and in the agency. As far as field work is concerned this individualization has implications for size and type of caseload and the varieties of experiences other than the immediate responsibility for clients, as, for example, acquaintance with administrative aspects of agency functioning and broader community contact. It calls for discrimination in the use of available learning experiences in the training agency and community. More study is required to develop criteria for types of experience in the field with particular emphasis on matching experience with the student's growing capacity.

Evaluation of Student

This brings us to the evaluation of the student's use of the training experience both in the field and in the classroom. In making such an evaluation, it is necessary first to know what the total experience involves and what meaning it has for the student. Our knowledge and understanding have been greatly enriched by Charlotte Towle's presentation of "The Emotional Elements in Learning in Professional Edu-

cation for Social Work."* In evaluation, as in all other aspects, school and agency have to work hand in hand in a continuous sharing process in which there is a free give and take. Only so can a sound learning process be promoted, strong points further developed, weak points discovered and where possible alleviated. And those students who seem to have made a wrong choice of profession or specialization helped to make a change in line with their capacities. When it comes to the final evaluation, school and agency and student must be equally agreed on the soundness of judging performance both in relation to the point at which the student started and that at which we expect a graduate to have arrived. At this time, agency, school and student will also have to reach a decision as to the student's ability and suitability for special settings and tasks. This means the projection of the student into the future as a beginning professional worker.

We have now in a limited way rounded the circle from selections to graduation. May we remember the challenge presented to us by the great needs of the many children here as well as all over the world that constantly calls for imaginative and dynamic workers which only a program of professional training that is imaginative and dynamic can produce.

* Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Schools of Social Work in January, 1948.

RELATIVE VALUES OF LEGAL AND VOLUNTARY COMMITMENTS OF CHILDREN TO INSTITUTIONS*

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The developing practice in protective services to children has focused a great deal of attention on the significance of the use of authority. This paper discusses the place of authority in deciding on foster care for children.

IN attempting to devise methods of dealing with a problem, it is necessary to have an understanding of the causes that led to the development of the problem.

With respect to placement where the need for placement arises out of an external situation over which the parents have little control, voluntary methods will be relatively effective.

Where a problem is caused by outside factors, one may have less conflict about it—less conflict, less guilt and therefore more receptivity to conscious logical reasoning. Placement caused by an accident, by an act of God, would consequently produce little if any conflicts in the minds of the parents. They may

be able to see the needs objectively and make the decision on the basis of the reality situation. Painful as the placement may be, as long as it is not fed by unconscious guilt, a logical approach is possible.

However, a word of caution is here indicated. Acts of God, external factors as we conceive them, are not necessarily seen as such by the people affected. The line drawn between acts that are within the realm of one's responsibility and those beyond are at times vague to people in trouble. The process of distortion extending one's responsibility into remote areas is common. The death of a husband by a tornado may at times be shifted by the wife into the area of her responsibility with ensuing guilt. The death may

* From a paper delivered at the National Conference of Social Work, April, 1948.

have stirred up repressed hostile feelings toward the husband, feelings which become equated with acts, since in the realm of the unconscious, wishes are often tantamount to acts. In such instances placement of a child will inevitably be charged with a great deal of guilt. Furthermore, unconsciously the child may be identified with the dead husband and to the mother the placement of the child is another expression of removing and annihilating the husband. This would obviously arouse guilt and anxiety about placement.

Differences Between Voluntary and Legal Commitment

Before we proceed in our discussion of the relative values of voluntary and legal commitment of children, a clarification of these terms is needed. Commitment covers two distinct processes: one is concerned with the planning and the final decision for the separation of the child from his home; the second concerns the child's actual stay in placement. Each phase has distinct values and problems of its own. Voluntary placement means that the decision to place the child has been arrived at by the parents and has the parents' acceptance, either actively or passively, and during the whole period of placement is continuously necessary to the parents. In legal commitment, however, the decision to remove the child from the family rests with an outside authority and it is the outside authority that determines the length of stay.

Although by definition, voluntary and legal commitment are distinct, different processes, actually we find a great deal of overlapping. Occasionally, in legal placement the whole process from its very inception is initiated and carried out by an outside authority. However, frequently even in legal commitment there is considerable participation by the parents during some phase of the process and sometimes throughout the process. Often, court action is preceded by complaints and formulation of the problem by the parents who come to the court voluntarily. In these situations the parents may be full of charges about the incorrigibility of the child. However, their anger is short-lived. They are unable to translate their anger into a decision and it is the responsibility of the outside authority to make the actual decision of placement.

In discussing the legal placement of children, the question arises, whose rights predominate—those of the parents or those of the child—the implication being that there is a contradiction between their interests that one has to be subordinated to the other. Upon analysis this clash of interest is more

apparent than real. Only in very rare situations do the interests of the children run contrary to those of the parents. If we view the situation from close range, from the immediate pain and pleasure experiences of the parents and children, the contradiction is real. The separation of a child from his family is usually painful psychologically and occasionally economically expensive. However, as we project ourselves into the future, the apparent contradiction of interests fades.

The most meaningful and lasting form of help is that through which a client is helped to mobilize his will to improve his situation.

The Significance of Placement

Placement of a child is to be viewed in most cases as symptomatic, with the main problem often diffused and submerged, like the classical one-seventh of the glacier that is exposed. It indicates that something in the familial situation has been disturbed and has reached such a point that the removal of the child from the home is necessary. Placement often crystallizes and exposes the friction and hostility that have been diffused and have eluded consciousness but which have gradually led to the development of the present crisis.

Separation of a child from his family constitutes a crisis. It is during the period of crisis that the ordinary tempo of life becomes accelerated. Certain processes are quickened and certain imperfections that were hardly noticeable during the usual course of events become magnified and visible to the naked eye. In the process of placement while the point of contact is the removal of the child from the home, our goal is broader, reaching into the wider matrix, the basic familial and parent-child relationships. In order to exploit the treatment possibilities inherent in placement, the involvement of the parents in the process would seem to be prerequisite. Voluntary commitment lends itself particularly to these possibilities.

The following is illustrative:

Mr. and Mrs. G. came breathlessly, requesting placement of their 15-year-old Joan. She had just been apprehended for stealing in a department store. They succeeded in having the charge dropped but were fearful of recurrence and were therefore eager to have her away for a while. When pressed as to why they were willing to take a rather drastic step on the basis of an isolated incident, they revealed that they suspected that this was not Joan's first time. While they appeared genuinely baffled by this episode, condemnation, self-pity, with an inarticulate diffused fear and bewilderment characterized their attitude. She was such an attractive bright girl, and an avaricious reader and excellent student. She had an adequate allowance. They seemed somewhat

surprised to discover in the course of their description of Joan's personality that in spite of her good endowment she really was not a happy child. She seemed rather shy, was occasionally moody and had few friends.

In retrospect they recalled that at times they sensed that something was wrong but they just did not give it enough thought to find out what it was. They were somewhat shocked when the question was directed to their marital relationship. They did not see any relevance. Furthermore, they were happily married—just the usual arguments. It was only in the process of exploring the need of removing Joan from the home atmosphere that a concealed layer of tension and hostility came to the surface. Both parents, for reasons too complicated to deal with at this point, had to maintain at a tremendous sacrifice the sham of a perfect marriage. Hostility and guilt with ensuing anxiety had charged the atmosphere in which Joan was brought up. Conflicted by loyalties to two antagonists whose feud never came out in the open, Joan became an extremely confused youngster. It was a moment of crisis that had shaken the apparent equanimity and forced them to face the basic problem. It was through their involvement in the process of placement that they became aware that Joan's difficulties were only one manifestation of the broader problem, their relationship to each other. One is tempted to speculate what the situation would have been if legal commitment were attempted without drawing in the parents. One may be justified in assuming that, faced with an external force, the parents' attention would be focused on, and their energy channelized in combating, the outside force, and the necessary introspection to perceive their real problem and its effect on Joan would be lacking.

In discussing methods of effecting placement and ways of dealing with the resistance of parents, a closer examination of the conflicts that underlie resistance is indicated. Here we shall touch upon some of the more common conflicts. The feeling of guilt in the parents that placement of a child produces has often been stressed. The sense of guilt is not to be viewed as something growing out of the immediate act of placement, but rather as a product of accumulated hostility repressed for many years and stirred up by the present problem. When a conflict stems from the immediate situation, a logical discussion about the need of placement normally suffices. It is only when the present conflict is a reactivation of an old repressed one, rooted in submerged hostility that an explanation on the basis of the consciously determined activity is not effective.

The threat to one's ego inherent in placement is

also to be viewed as not having originated in the present situation. This threat is overwhelming because it reactivates the fears experienced in the past. The immediate problem is a reaffirmation of the inadequacies and failures that one has been struggling to deny. In helping parents to accept placement it is therefore necessary not to allow the guilt and sense of failure of the past to attach itself to the current situation.

Voluntary commitment is less threatening. In placement there is an admission of failure, of impotence coupled with an even more damaging implication that others may succeed where the parent has failed. However, when the parents retain the right of decision the sense of failure associated with placement is greatly alleviated. If the parents retain the power to give and withdraw the child from placement, they preserve the sense of being the final authority in the situation. They may view the others whom they entrust with the responsibility of their child as merely an extension of their own power whom they can manipulate, authorize, and dismiss at will. In voluntary placement there is also a tentativeness in contrast to the finality which characterizes an action which rests outside one's own decision.

However, in dealing with human behavior we have to be aware of the presence of opposites, and of the counterparts of all our basic wishes and drives resulting in the phenomena of ambivalence. While striving for independence in mastering one's situation there is the opposite wish to be mastered. The sense of relief to one caught in doubt that matters will be determined by forces over which he has no control is obvious. There is comfort in inevitability. It relieves one of the responsibility of struggling for change and of making decisions. The ambivalence about wielding power or giving it up is present in all of us. It is the degree and the relative strength of these conflicting tendencies that determine our behavior, our personality.

At the risk of oversimplification, we may say that the ascertaining of the relative position of the desire to wield or give up power is basic in determining whether placement should be voluntary or through commitment. The dependent person who looks for security in being dominated will probably be comfortable when faced with an inevitable situation and will welcome legal placement. It would also offer him the secondary gratifications of being dependent on a powerful authority that assumes responsibility and makes decisions for him. However, he who is basically independent will need considerable choice and freedom in deciding on placement of a child.

When people are in trouble their capacity to assume responsibility is often limited. In fact, their inability to take initiative is frequently the very core of their problem. It would therefore seem illogical to expect them to make the moves to secure help. With many the need to decide throws them into a panic. We see these parents knocking on the door of every agency in the community requesting help for the children without being able to stop and actually take the help offered.

And so, although we stress the values of voluntary placement and subscribe to the basic principles of casework as to the dignity and inalienable rights of the individual and the right of each individual to do his own planning, we believe that in certain situations the imposition of an outside will is not only justifiable but necessary.

While accepting this use of authority extreme care in its use is necessary. The component parts of any plan may offer a number of areas where the individual may take initiative and make decisions. One of the most difficult skills to acquire is the ability to judge the strength and the capacities of people toward solving their own problems. And it is perhaps even more difficult to achieve the self-restraint necessary to allow a person to continue to function independently in his own, although slow, pace in those areas where he is able to. It requires continuous evaluation of the individual and of oneself. Often, we are not sufficiently mindful of the strength generated in the process of facing a problem and in making some initial although minor steps toward solution. While intellectually we may understand it, we may find it difficult to act on that knowledge because of our subjective needs and fears—the need to give, the fear to deprive, the difficulty of watching a person struggle. The corollary therefore is that even in legal placement where the final decision has to be made by authority, there is still considerable opportunity to involve the parent in the process. Sufficient will may be mobilized by the parents to go through a few steps in bringing the case to the agency and to the court. Only in rare situations would it be advisable to take the initiative in all the stages from petition through to final decision.

The relative values of legal placement become particularly obvious during the second stage, the period of actual placement. Many parents who were able to mobilize their strength and decide on placement find it difficult to weather this period. They are faced by extreme pressure from the children who often know their parents' vulnerable points and use them very effectively, stirring up guilt, pity, etc. Furthermore,

this period is fraught with considerable conflict to the parents. If the child shows improvement, it reactivates the parents' sense of failure, if there is no change, there is an intensification of the parents' sense of guilt about having the child placed. The immediate question whether or not to take the child home reaches at times obsessional proportions, devouring the parents' energy and making it extremely difficult to deal with the broader problems.

Through legal placement parents are spared this continuous dilemma. It assures a continuous experience uninterrupted by withdrawing and returning the child, which has often characterized some voluntary placements. Occasionally, even in legal commitments, parents respond to the pressure of their children and their own guilt with so much anxiety that it is advisable to let them go through the process of petitioning discharge. This way they feel that they have discharged their responsibility and upon denial of the petition they settle down comfortably. True, this may run contrary to our goal in treatment which is to help people face squarely their feelings and responsibilities. Legal commitment may appear to offer a parent an opportunity to hide his indifference or hostility behind the legal barriers. It allows the children to indulge in idealization of their parents and their devotion to them. However, in placement, as in any casework or reality situation, we may have to subordinate one value to another. When faced with parents' incapacity for consistency in decision and inability to resist pressure, legal steps are necessary.

Occasionally, it might be even necessary to utilize the parents' narcissism and exploit their feeling of rejection to bring about placement. The following is illustrative:

Mrs. L., an infantile, narcissistic person, came requesting placement for her 12-year-old youngster who was involved in considerable delinquent activity. It became obvious that this immature, rather limited woman was no match for the bright, exploiting youngster. However, when legal placement was suggested, Mrs. L. could not accept it. When in the course of her complaints she brought out how she has been exploited by him, it was pointed out to her, if placed voluntarily he will continue to do so by pressuring for his removal. It was her needs rather than the boy's that were stressed in order to bring about legal placement.

Conclusion

In conclusion, both legal and voluntary placement have possibilities and values for both parent and child. In dealing with human behavior, the diversity of existing problems dictates a diversity and flexibility of approach. No single approach, refined and perfected as it may be, can be applied in all situations, similar though they may appear.

EDITORIAL COMMENTS

Interpreting Adoption

IN interpreting adoption practices several fundamental concepts which have a direct bearing on the adoption problem need to be restated. It must also be made clear that adoption agencies cannot take the sole responsibility for some of the aspects of the problem. The related fields of child care, health and mental hygiene each have a share in interpretations.

The significance of the relationship of an own parent to his child needs to be made vivid and convincing. We know that most parents have such value for their children that only under unusual circumstances is it psychologically as well as materially beneficial to the child to have ties to his own people severed permanently. This is not readily accepted in the face of the natural desire of childless families to acquire children. The growing community awareness that a family is not truly a family unless there are children in it arouses a great deal of sympathy for the couple who wants "to give a child a home." The agency is confronted with other groups interested in "helping people" as well as with a large body of extremely articulate but often misinformed members of the general public.

In interpreting its services, an adoption agency must be aware of the conflict of the public because the need for these services arises out of situations not in harmony with natural law. This is certainly true of parents who give up their children for adoption. Ordinarily mothers and fathers love and provide for their own children. When parents, married or unmarried, must sever relationships from their own children permanently, tensions and anxieties are almost always present which need to be dealt with sympathetically and with understanding. On the other hand, the husbands and wives who wish to adopt children are faced with many mixed feelings about needing help in so personal a problem as childlessness. Here too the agency workers, sympathetic and eager to help to the fullest extent, are frequently unable to do so because the problems go far beyond the family's desire for a child. The situation is often further complicated by the criticisms and misunderstandings not only of the would-be parents but of their friends who cannot understand why the wished-for children are not instantly forthcoming.

We need to interpret why the conscientious child-placing agency has to focus primary attention on the children of the parents or mothers who are faced with the question of keeping or not keeping the child.

We need to interpret why they always need help in arriving at a plan which will give them reasonable peace of mind and provide the legal and emotional security possible for the child when the mother has been given that help.

In working with the own parents and adoptive parents of the children involved we have a responsibility to interpret that the agency has to work within the framework of laws, which regulate adoptive placement. These laws represent the community's concern with the safety of its children and the families involved. This concern is expressed by the regulation of the transfer of custody of the child from own parent to a guardian or to the care of the agency. Another set of laws governs the transfer of permanent custody to the adopting parents. Agencies do not make these laws but they do have to abide by them and interpret them as humanely as possible for everyone concerned.

We need to make clear that the nature of the agency's responsibility may be determined by how children come under the care of a child-adoption agency. In a large number of situations own parents, often unmarried, voluntarily decide on adoption. These are parents who wish to be sure that their children will have the benefit of all the safeguards which agency adoption can provide. A smaller number are complete orphans or children who have been removed by due process of law from their natural guardians. When the child is without parents it is the task of the adoption agency to help him toward other parents. The agency should be able to do this for any child. Whatever his age, the color of his skin or his strengths and weaknesses, the child must be respected as a human soul who needs the care and attention of parents who will love him as their own. The adoption agency must try to find a family who will want him as he is and will love and enjoy him for himself. It must use its experience, the knowledge of its medical, psychological and psychiatric advisors to seek for him the kind of environment which is most likely to prove to be a happy one for him and in which he can make the most of his potentialities. Unless the agency applies this knowledge and has convictions about its responsibilities for the plans it makes for each child, respecting his individuality, it has little to offer the adoptive parents or children that is better than the often casual and haphazard arrangements between own parents and adoptive parents.

Publicity and interpretation need to focus as much attention as possible upon the special services which

agencies offer not only in safeguarding the legal rights of all concerned, but also in suiting the child to the home and the home to the child. The value of such services needs to be more widely recognized. We must interpret how the agency experiences an embarrassment of riches of certain kinds of homes and a serious scarcity of others. This paradox of too many homes of one kind and too few of another confuses the mathematically minded public, which adds up the number of children eligible for adoption and the large number of families waiting for children, and wonders why the delays.

It is not easy for most adoption agencies to explain that they are generally understaffed and often have inadequate funds, and consequently they must restrict their services. The lay public understandably feels it is unreasonable and arbitrary that agencies are unable to serve all the children who need their help. They must be helped to know that if and when services are expanded, more childless families will have the satisfaction of a child and more children will be available for one-child families who cannot have more children of their own. Even then, of course, there will be in any community scores of families without a child. In this group are the families who do not have the qualities which the agency believes is needed for foster parenthood, and those for whom there is no "right" child known to the agency.

Families who wish or think they wish to adopt children but do not succeed in getting one, present a problem which may be difficult to solve without creating hurt or even sometimes unresolved bitterness. It is a problem with which the adoption agencies, both public and private, have great concern but which clearly they cannot solve alone. The adoption agency is aware that it often is the recipient of too much resentment from those who do not receive a child and too much gratitude from satisfied adoptive parents and adopted children. It can cope alone with the latter group during the course of supervision of children in their adoptive homes, but it can do only a little to help the childless families who are not given a child. This is where the responsibility must be shared with health, mental hygiene and family counseling agencies. They need to recognize this fact before encouraging a family to think of adoption, and when the adoption agency is unable to place a child, they need to help these couples adjust to their problem whatever it may be.

The child adoption agencies must help the public know that there will always be some children whose parents cannot give them love and care for them;

that we work for greater wisdom in this delicate and highly individual task of knowing which children belong to this group; that we plead for funds with which to carry out our responsibilities to serve these children as quickly as possible by placing them in adoptive homes suited to them; that the increasing number of childless and one-child families who want the enriching experience of rearing children need sympathetic understanding and help in ways that require the services of health and counseling agencies, as well as those concerned with adoption.

SOPHIE VAN S. THEIS,

Secretary Child Placing and Adoption Committee and Assistant Secretary State Charities Aid Association, New York City

NEW LEAGUE PROVISIONALS

CHILD WELFARE DIVISION

Board of Public Welfare
470 Indiana Avenue N.W.
Washington, D. C.
Mrs. Robin Miller, Superintendent of Child Welfare

CHILDREN'S GUILD OF THE LADIES RELIEF SOCIETY

383-43rd Street
Oakland 9, California
Miss Vera Bagryanova, Executive Secretary

THE DAY NURSERY ASSOCIATION OF CLEVELAND

2050 East 96th Street
Cleveland, Ohio
Miss Eleanor Hosley, Executive Secretary

CHILDREN'S BUREAU

4208 Swiss Avenue
Dallas 4, Texas
Miss Lou-Eva Longan, Executive Secretary

REGIONAL CONFERENCES

The Southern Regional Conference will be held February 10, 11 and 12, 1949, at the Jefferson Davis Hotel, Montgomery, Alabama. The Chairman is Mrs. Edward Gresham, Director, Bureau of Child Welfare, Alabama Department of Public Welfare.

The Ohio Valley Regional Conference will be held March 17, 18 and 19, 1949, at the Netherland Plaza Hotel, Cincinnati, Ohio. The Chairman is Mr. Duane W. Christy, Executive Vice-President of The Children's Home of Cincinnati.

The Eastern Regional Conference will be held April 7, 8 and 9, 1949, at the Ambassador Hotel, Atlantic City, New Jersey. The Chairman is Mr. Walter P. Townsend, General Secretary, Children's Aid Society of Pennsylvania.

The Midwest Regional Conference will be held May 1 to 4, 1949, at the Hotel LaSalle, Chicago, Illinois. The Chairman is Mrs. Mary Lawrence, Executive Director, Jewish Children's Bureau of Chicago.

The New England Regional Conference will be held June 6 and 7, 1949, at the Wentworth-by-the-Sea, Portsmouth, New Hampshire. The Chairman is Mrs. Jeanette H. Melton, General Secretary, New Hampshire Children's Aid Society.

THE CASEWORKER PROMOTES BETTER UNDERSTANDING*

Lucile Barber

Supervisor, Home Finding Department, Michigan Children's Institute, Ann Arbor, Michigan

This paper suggests what is the unique contribution of the caseworker promoting better understanding of Professional Child Welfare Services. What do you think?

WHY cannot we as caseworkers take the basic concepts which guide our work with children and parents and translate them into our Public Relations? Perhaps such an approach would help us to cope with our difficulties in this field, and aid us in creating a better public understanding of child welfare problems. We are inclined to approach the public with a sense of defenselessness. We seem to feel that the casework technique which works wonders on a person-to-person basis, is a poor tool where change is to be effected in more than one person at a time.

Yet we constantly speak of "the public's stake in child welfare," the community's "right to know the basic philosophy and principles on which agency program and practice are based." It seems to me this must mean that no matter how much faith we may have in our professional child welfare services and in casework, we do not feel that as a profession we are part of the public. There is an apparent schism in our feeling that we as a group need to save the public's children while the public, as an opposing group, lacks sufficient interest in what happens to some of its children. And yet professional child welfare services have already grown immensely in public acceptance. We have all seen social workers and psychologists hired by the community to work with children's problems in the juvenile courts and the schools; obviously many of them were hired as an act of faith, since few people knew just what we could do or how we could help with children. The community knew only that it wanted to help its children.

We social workers have been watching the great national effort to improve education in America and with it the lot of teachers. I, for one, feel no envy for this unprecedented campaign for education. It rouses more anxiety than anything else in me. Since when have we, as caseworkers, subscribed to the principle that we can make people good if we can rouse enough guilt in them by shouting loud and long about their failures? I believe a reaction to this technique will set in and it will resemble what caseworkers would predict that our individual clients would do, if we mis-

handled them in this manner. They would need to get rid of their guilt and of us too. They would begin to be late for their appointments, or forget them. Eventually their behavior would say more and more clearly that something was not working right. The caseworker would have to examine what is wrong with her handling of the case.

Similarly in the face of public attacks upon child welfare programs and social services we will do well to examine the nature of our relationship with the public.

The Psychology of Public Relations

Casework is a skill built upon psychological realities of which the caseworker herself is an integral part. A considerable portion of our professional training and experience is directed against getting "involved" with our clients either through setting them and their problems apart as different from ourselves and our problems, or through becoming so identified with them that we lose perspective. The promotion of better understanding of anything whatsoever always has this in common with casework: It is also the handling of psychological realities to which there are two parties with personal stakes. What are the psychological realities involved in the caseworker's approach to the cultivation of public understanding?

A little boy, thought to be headed straight for perdition by all the right-minded people who have contact with him, is described by us as a child who is "misunderstood," and who has somehow been deprived of the love and understanding of parents. This is accepted if the parents have somehow openly offended the public morals, or if (and this is a very important *if*) the judge, or the teacher, or the newspaper reporter, or whatever other adults involved happen to be able to identify themselves with children out of a deep, unconscious suspicion of parents, of adults, as a group. On the other hand *if* we happen to be involved with adults who have solved their own problems of growing up by becoming suspicious of and hostile to all the struggles of children, we become as suspect and as threatening as the conduct of the children we work with. How do we handle this conflict? As child welfare workers we classify adults

* From a paper delivered at the National Conference of Social Work, April, 1948.

as nice people, who feel as we do about children, or as people who are not nice and who do not feel as we do about children. This is hardly a professional attitude based on our hard-earned casework knowledge and skills to secure that much-described, desirable end "movement on the case"—change in a person's attitude and behavior.

That is, we as child welfare workers, as caseworkers, are not taking an adult position as interpreters of an effective technique of treating children's problems. Instead, we assume the attitude of defensive special pleading with the people least able to be moved by special pleading for the misconducts and problems of childhood, which they had repressed from consciousness, and for which they had substituted a rigid, exaggerated adulthood in self-protection.

This attitude toward the public also betrays us into appropriating the public's children as our own on the grounds that we are better parents to them than the public. This comes about by a psychological mechanism which must be familiar to every child welfare worker—the need to save the rejected child, who by identification is us, from the bad parent who, by the same identification, becomes our real or phantasied bad parents. This is the schism, to which I referred earlier, which places us as child welfare workers on one side defending our child from the bad parent, the public, on the opposing side.

What do we contribute to public understanding of our professional services under such circumstances? All too frequently the child welfare worker's only contact with the public is as someone who is withholding adoption of a child from a childless woman on nebulous grounds; or the worker is presented as someone who snatched a child away from an erring but now repentant mother to whom a chance to prove her sincerity is being denied.

But the caseworker must gain public confidence through public understanding if we are to win extended financial and emotional support. Casework is essentially a skill for developing emotional maturity and social competence. The kind of public relations we want is fundamentally a means for deepening and broadening community maturity and competence in dealing with children's needs. Child welfare services have techniques which could be used to help the public toward solving its problems with its children, and changing the conditions under which children grow up, particularly a public in which the interrelationship of child-parent-and-community is paramount.

Change occurs only through understanding. Understanding means the ability to bring past experi-

ence to bear on a present problem, ability to rearrange past experience in terms of a present need. The public is the sum of individuals. The generic knowledge upon which casework is built is knowledge of the psychological nature of people, how people grow and live.

Frequently we are advised to hire a professional public relations man. What does an able public relations person do? He uses casework knowledge positively. He describes and explains and illustrates in clear, basic English what social services are, how they work, what they can be expected to achieve for the money spent on them. The difference in his use of general casework principles and ours is that he listens more sensitively to the public's needs while we use the same insights in active defense of children against this public. The unique contribution of the caseworker to this problem should be to make clear that public relations is not a mystery—it is another use of concepts in the use of which we have particular skill.

We need to learn how to make common cause with an ever-increasing number of individuals who are part of the same public as we are. We need to identify ourselves with children and adults and to apply what we know professionally about human nature in such a way that we further the public's ability to accept our knowledge about the needs of children. We need to present our child welfare services to the public in the way we present them day by day in agencies to countless parents. We face many of these parents who do not at first accept us nor our convictions about how children grow and develop into well-adjusted adults. Our skills are used toward helping them mobilize their strengths and abilities to meet the needs of their children—to find some way in which the deep needs of the child and the deep emotional needs of the parent come together. We work slowly and patiently to help a troubled parent accept emotionally interpretations that will increase his insight into the problem of his child. We do not always recognize this process for what it is. We are a little afraid that if we call it developing understanding it may be thought of as "intellectual understanding" and not "emotional insight," and there is a vast difference between intellectual understanding and emotional insight. The fact is that there is no true understanding without emotional insight. Up to the present our public relations has been too spasmodic and unrelated to the day-by-day life of the community to reach any large segment of the public in a way which will create true understanding.

The unique contribution of casework to the promotion of understanding of professional services to children is that it has a body of knowledge about people, experience with people, understanding of how they grow, how their needs affect their growth, why some ways of meeting these needs are bad while others are good. This knowledge is not ours alone. The psychiatrists, the psychologists and the sociologists all have the basic knowledge. What is unique with caseworkers are the process and skill they have developed in applying this knowledge in helping individual people with their day-to-day problems. We have learned to apply the knowledge that mature growth is an emotional give and take, not a series of pitched battles.

When we learn to apply this toward the problem of better public relations for professional child welfare services, we will feel less threatened and be more comfortable in the progress already made. We will remember that doctors, nurses, lawyers and other professional groups had to live through a period of gradual broadening of public understanding of their professional contributions, that the level of professional training in medicine and law has changed since the turn of the century because we the public are so completely demanding of higher standards of service in these professions.

This should help us to accept our individual professional responsibility to interpret our part in community life on a day-to-day basis, to behave and work not as special pleaders of special cases but as what we are—representatives of a very special interest of the community. Taxes for a needed new road, for education can be raised when everybody understands the part these play in his life. Child welfare will secure support of good professional services when the relationship of these services to the individuals of the community are understood.

The public is seeking a way to better life in America, and it knows that better child care is an important part of this better life. Caseworkers have not only the skills to help people individually, but to meet the public as interpreters of the basic problems in good child welfare services, which will make the problems of healthy growth and development as real and as well understood as is the necessity for new roads and new schools. We need to act on our belief that all change in public opinion comes with an aggregate, of insight and understanding by individuals. We need to really believe that the casework techniques of helping people can be translated, and will really work.

READER'S FORUM

Field Work Placements

Dear Editor:

It would be helpful to us if we could have the results of any experience of workers from your agency who might have discussed in the field the question of placements by the schools of social work in agencies which you represent.

Have you held, either regularly or on occasion, in any city, formal discussions among the agencies as to their feelings and thinking about the agency obligation for social work education and about the relation the agencies have with schools for field work placements? If you have held such discussions, is there any way in which we might secure the significant parts of your findings? If you have not held such discussions, is it because the agencies appear to be reasonably well satisfied with the present status of field work placements and it is therefore not one of their more important concerns?

We should be most appreciative of any information you could send on these matters because our Committee is making an earnest attempt to work out the most fruitful system of field work placements possible.

REPLY

This request was followed by a field visit by our consultant on training. She met with a group of agencies and helped them discuss and plan ways and means of meeting this problem. The need for sufficient trained staff is a matter of universal concern. Some have put their question this way:

"We would like to have the names of several agencies budgeting from \$2,000 to \$5,000 a year for scholarship training in order that we could utilize their experience in restoring the scholarship fund here. We would also be interested in receiving training material which you may have in the League office or which you may know about in some of the agencies, inasmuch as we are going ahead with our plan for a unit of four workers in training."

Some have wondered about putting a training unit in their agency. Others have requested schools to accredit field experience in their agency as a way of inducing workers to get some training.

The League has been active in agencies' scholarship and work-study planning. We would like you to share with us your current problems and plans for staff development.

A BOARD MEMBER SPEAKS ON

What is a Board Member

This article talks not only on what it means to be a board member, what is its source of satisfaction, but what knowledge is needed and how such training can be achieved.

I WAS talking with a friend the other day who was very much excited about a new work she was doing and enjoying very much.

"It's the most rewarding thing I've ever done," she exclaimed. "I'm working out at the Children's Center with the children—reading to them, making scrapbooks—you know, just working with them. Would you come out with me sometime?"

I said I thought what she was doing was wonderful but that I was a board member and they ordinarily didn't have much contact with the children.

"But why?"

She was astonished.

I tried to explain to her that it was a policy which had grown out of a conviction on the part of both the staff and the board that it took professional people to do a professional job. I didn't want to dim her enthusiasm because in the convalescent cottage where she was working, she filled a definite need.

She listened, unconvinced, and then said,

"But what do you actually do then? What do you get out of it, if you don't have any contact with the children? What's the point?"

As she spoke I suddenly remembered that years before I had asked a board member the same question. I remembered my own surprise that the board member didn't know personally and work with all the children in the institution. My friend's supposition (and mine of years before) was that only the work with the children was valuable and satisfying. Now, as a board member myself, I can see the many aspects of the board member's job and can realize how completely these responsibilities had escaped me before. I'm beginning to know what it means to be a board member and how to interpret the attendant activities.

Every board member should have a definite opinion on what makes the job real and satisfying when professional people do the direct job. She should find out how she can help in the development of the agency's policies. She has to go beyond her own agency and learn something of other agencies in order to evaluate her own agency soundly. For how can she judge its place in the community without knowing

something of its relationship to other public and private agencies? And she must develop a concept of the interrelatedness of all social work. And if she doesn't do these things she is not able to discharge her responsibilities intelligently.

The Case Committee—For Orientation

As a new board member I feel that I've got to start by knowing my own agency and how it is run and who runs it. I should know the staff and what they are doing. I must become familiar with social work terms and techniques, at least sufficiently to understand what the staff is talking about.

If I had served on the board of a similar agency, if I had come up "through committee" as it were, then I would have known something of social work, its techniques, the child welfare resources of the community, and I would have been less bewildered. Unfortunately, I was one who knew nothing of case-loads and group work and little of my agency's functions, policies and resources. I felt much as if I had come in at the middle of a movie and was expected to identify the characters and forecast the end. So the thing I wanted most was to find my way around, not just around the grounds and buildings but to know what it was all about.

Together with the other new members, I was put on Case Committee. In this committee, the initial orientation takes place. Here is where one finds the materials to build a background against which to view the entire mechanism of the agency, for it offers more immediate information than any other committee. It is the heart of the agency.

Our Case Committee operates in this way. Staff workers describe their activities and present case records of work done; how the case was initiated, the techniques involved, the results. For example, the home finding worker took over one meeting, bringing out the number of inquiries, the number of homes found, the difficulties encountered in finding them, etc. At another meeting the work of the attending psychiatrist was gone into and a case record was given of a boy and the work being done with him by

the staff worker under the direction of the psychiatrist.

At the next meeting the types of problems facing the intake worker were discussed and case records were read of several recently admitted children. The names and descriptions of several of the state institutions (resources) were brought into this program. At another meeting the complete adoption procedures were taken up in detail. (This was directly after a change of policy in the adoption fee charges had been discussed at the monthly board meeting.) A case record of an adoption from the first telephone call to the final signing of the adoption papers illustrated graphically one of the important functions of the agency. Again and again the meetings are taken up with the presentation of cases which illustrate some function or policy or resource of the agency. These are always presented in such a way that the board member takes home with him some further knowledge of the agency's activities.

The discussion of what happens to a child after he is accepted for placement was a valuable lesson in social work techniques. The procedure itself, the psychiatric implications of the child's actions, the work with and the actions of the foster parent, the follow-up activities—all these presentations were tremendously helpful to the Case Committee member. Another résumé took up black market activities in babies—why such a market, what it leads to, its dangers, etc. Thus over a period of time, through the programs described, the structure of the agency became apparent.

But I think a committee member has more to do than just sit and listen. There must be a thoughtful participation in the meeting together with the exercise of the right to question and challenge.

I'll never forget my own terrible conflict of desire to know more and hesitation to expose my own ignorance which I felt at the first meetings of Case Committee which I attended. And I am sure many other new board members must go through the same experience. So I believe that all perplexities ought to be cleared up as they arise. I am backed up in this by the action of the president of a progressive woman's college who was put on the board of a welfare agency. She was completely unfamiliar with the procedures and policies of the organization and was anxious to find out about these as soon as possible. Time after time, she would stop the meetings to ask questions. It was pretty boring to the old members but she very rapidly became part of the working organization. So if a college president can show her lack of knowledge

by asking questions, I'm all for following the precedent she set.

The Board Member as Interpreter

So as one sits in committee and listens and asks questions and takes notes one acquires knowledge. This increased knowledge of and sympathy with the agency and with social work in general makes it easier to be an effective interpreter. Ideally, a good board member is supposed to be a two-way mirror. One must reflect the agency to the public and, conversely, one must reflect the public to the agency. Obviously, familiarity with the agency's policies and functions is the prerequisite to proper interpretation to others. I've got to understand so thoroughly the workings of the agency and to be so enthusiastic about it that through me the public is constantly made aware of the good deeds being done, and the further good deeds which could be done if more support were available.

Other Sources of Knowledge

The better job I can do as an interpreter, the more influence I can exert toward bringing about the goals of the agency. And it is in the bringing about of these goals, whatever they may be, that I as a board member get my greatest satisfactions. It has nothing to do with the children directly. It has much to do with satisfying my desire to serve, my need to serve, my ambition to make the agency a personal responsibility.

All the preparation for this work cannot come from attendance at Case Committee. Some of the broader aspects of social work principles should be studied if one is going to be an efficient board member. One can go to other committee meetings, go to social work conferences and council meetings and there are many excellent books on the subjects. One of the best is the recent book by Helen I. Clarke, Professor of Sociology at the University of Wisconsin, called *Principles and Practices of Social Work*. With more awareness on the part of board members, some of the Case Committee meetings might well be carried on as discussion groups. At meetings of this sort, some challenging question might be raised for discussion. The staff workers might finally go beyond the "what happened to Johnny" stage and get the members started thinking along the lines of philosophical theory, rather than purely technical lines. There are visual education tools which might be used to spark such meetings.

Suggested Institutes

I am wondering, too, if the agency would not be wise to sponsor one or two "orientation" talks on what a well-adjusted board member ought to know, either or both of which might be open to the public. Such a thing can be heaven for new members of any agency and old members would be bound to benefit. The two talks might be roughly outlined:

First

Agency

Functions

Structure

Policies

(Staff to discuss, run through cases, define policies. Group to go through institution buildings.)

What other agencies do related work in

Town

County

State

Protected institutions

Community organization

Community Chest

Council of Social Agencies

Conference of Social Work

Second

Social Work

Introduction to techniques and terms

Functions:

In public and private agencies

To community at large

Aims:

Immediate

Future

Casework

Analysis of types of treatment:

Children, families, handicapped, and so forth

Analysis of types of skills:

Diagnosis, psychiatry, re-education, and so forth

Such talks could be made as elaborate or as simple as the agency thought best. But such an orientation would be bound to make better-informed board members, better equipped to carry out their jobs and more eager to do so because they would know better what they were supposed to be doing.

The Children's Center has conducted "orientation institutes" for new board members at intermittent periods during the past fifteen years and has found the experience well worth the doing and hopes to expand the effort in years to come.

MRS. CLEMENT C. CLARKE,

Board Member, The Children's Center, New Haven, Connecticut

UNSOUND TALK ABOUT ADOPTION*

IN a recent issue of *The Christian Herald*, and more recently in *The Reader's Digest* for September, has been published an article by Frederick G. Brownell, entitled "Why You Can't Adopt a Baby." From our point of view it is unfortunate to find *The Christian Herald*, which supposedly reaches the homes of church-going people seeking sound ideas about child welfare, giving their readers this particular article.

The title suggests a negative attitude, and the whole tone throughout the article is one of bias and attack rather than of soberly getting at the facts. We do not know the source of the writer's information, and some of the statements are given a slant which does not correctly represent the best policies being followed among child-caring societies.

It is incorrect to say that a million American children are in need of adoption if by such a statement the writer goes on to suggest that all the children in care of public and private child-caring agencies are adoptable or available for adoption. Most people understand that a large number of the children in the care of child-caring agencies have one or both parents who, whatever else may be said of them, are not at all willing to consent to the adoption of their children. Recently among the number of children in our care, which would be a considerable figure in the counting up which the writer made, there were six children of a widow who faced a temporary emergency. The children were having the protection they needed until the emergency was over. Certainly those six children are not in need of adoption as they have a fine mother. There is no doubt that there are in children's institutions in this country some children who present a tragic need for love and parents. But first of all we must remind the publisher and the writer that most of these children are not babies, and Mr. Brownell's article is talking about adopting babies. We do not know of any million babies available for adoption. To blame the agencies for not placing children for adoption when the agencies have not the legal right to do so, and when the great majority of people who want children want only infants, is rather out of bounds.

We happen to know that *The Christian Herald* can have full interpretation of the best policies from such sources as the United States Children's Bureau and the Child Welfare League of America.† If *The*

* Reprinted from *Little Wanderers' Advocate*, September, 1948.

† Mr. Brownell did have conferences with League staff members as well as Agency Executives.—Ed.

Christian Herald wishes to help in this quite important matter it is obviously up to the editors and publishers to secure an article from one of those sources as a response to Mr. Brownell's somewhat sensational and unsound interpretation of the situation.

There is no doubt that social workers in this field have much more to learn, and some things to unlearn, about adoption, but the majority of them are soberly seeking wisdom and guidance under difficult circumstances.

As a social worker at The New England Home for Little Wanderers, with a long experience in meeting prospective adoptive parents and in placing many children for adoption, I should like to make some comments about our own practice, provoked by Mr. Brownell's statements. These statements correctly represent our practice.

1. Younger couples are preferable as adoptive parents since they more accurately represent natural family life, but couples are not turned down flatly because they are over forty. We have attempted to be elastic and to have few rules to which we must rigidly hold. Many women over thirty-five have been made adoptive mothers by our agency.
2. Couples have not been refused because the husband and wife did not attend the same church.
3. Most couples have been married for more than two years before they apply to adopt since they wish to explore medical possibilities for aiding them in having children of their own. If a pregnancy is medically established as impossible, a couple married less than two years would be considered by our agency.
4. Children have been placed for adoption by our agency in homes where the adoptive couple had a natural child.
5. Children have been placed in homes representing all walks of life, from that of the day laborer to that of the college professor. The home is selected from the point of view of the child, choosing the home in which the child's capacities and limitations can most happily fit, in order to make him a good and useful citizen.
6. It is true that there may be a long wait before the right child is found for a specific home.
7. We do not apologize for saying that we are "in business to serve the needs of children"; that is our first and real responsibility.
 - (a) It is true that there are not enough children to go around.
 - (b) The number of babies available to agencies would be greater if a black market did not exist.
 - (c) At our agency we do not limit the intake of children from an adoptive point of view.
 - (d) A "well ward" is a new phrase to us. It is difficult to find room for sick children in Boston hospitals with the current hospital situation.
8. Children with minor defects have not been denied adoption. A child is not labeled "unsuitable for adoption" unless a study of the child's physical or mental condition and a study of the family background indicates such a decision.
9. It is not a matter of being fussy with "matching" children to adoptive parents; it is a matter of wisdom to match as well as possible in order that both children and adoptive parents may be happy. A child of some racial backgrounds would look out of place with parents of a very different race. The Iowa studies pointing out that adopted children tend to take after the families in whose homes they are reared, rather than their own blood relatives, is not confirmed by the experience of all social workers.
10. Our children are carefully tested by a skilled psychologist. We all know that a happy and secure child functions better, both physically and mentally, and this is taken into consideration at the time of the test.

—ELSIE STOUGAARD

BOOK NOTES

YOUTH IN DESPAIR, by Ralph S. Banay. Coward-McCann, Inc. N. Y. 1948. \$3.50.

The reviewer was very favorably impressed with this short book which was filled with significant material about delinquency in youth. It is a practical, forceful presentation of a difficult subject, by one who is aware of the many important, complex elements that are responsible for delinquency. The reader is helped by a section at the beginning of the book dealing with brief summaries of the thirteen chapters.

Certain factors stood out in this book and these will be referred to briefly. The author repeatedly emphasizes the fact that delinquency represents the child's attempt to make an emotional adjustment. Through delinquency, he attempts to take care of needs which were denied him when he was required—through the process of socialization—to give up the deep instinctual drives that demanded satisfaction. These were given up in order to become one of the group. Thus, delinquency is a sign of loss of equilibrium. If this is true, says the author, punishment has no meaning since it cannot restore the equilibrium, and it creates a need for revenge. He is amazed by the fact that despite the conclusions of scientific research which demonstrated that punishment has never stopped nor lessened serious crime, society continues to punish.

Mr. Banay discusses the sociological factors that produce delinquency, without at the same time overlooking the individual factors. He includes a good description of what he considers an ideally organized community.

His treatment of the subject of truancy is good. His discussion of the environmental factors within the family did not stand out as well as did his presentation in some of the other sections. The book contains an excellent discussion of statistics related to delinquency. There is a particularly good discussion of the Negro problem and the role of the cultural problems of the second generation immigrants.

The author is acquainted with psychoanalytic literature on delinquency, and has chosen from his own experience those delinquent acts which stand out most clearly as being related to sexual symbolic acts. The discussion of the mind and body sounded sketchy and did not seem to have as many facts, as did the other chapters, to indicate that the statements were controlled or as thoroughly studied.

The book contains a good description of personality tests, particularly as applied to the delinquent. This is in Chapter IX of the book. It was the feeling

of the reviewer in reading this material that the contribution would have been more valuable if a greater attempt had been made to subdivide delinquency into the different types. It would have been well, for example, to know the different reactions to these tests—of the neurotic delinquent, the non-neurotic, and those suffering from organic disease of the central nervous system. Further research along these lines should be carried on.

The author's handling of the subject of diagnosis and treatment is good, particularly the part dealing with the role of the court and probation office. There are good practical suggestions about improving these resources. The book also contains a good description of institutions for the treatment of delinquency, and their shortcomings. The author emphasizes the importance of trained personnel in the treatment of delinquency, particularly in the problems of emotional pathology. The Chapters on "What Is Crime" and "Prevention" are comprehensive and all-inclusive.

This book is highly recommended as a text for those who deal with the behavior problems of youth.

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ADOPTION IN NEW YORK CITY. An inquiry into Adoptions and Related Services made by the New York City Committee on Adoptions. Welfare Council of New York City, 44 East 23d Street, New York 10, N. Y. 1948. \$1.25.

This report of the inquiry sponsored by the New York Academy of Medicine, the United Hospital Fund of New York and the Welfare Council of New York City is an epoch-making document. It brings into focus not only the problems inherent in the adoption process in one great metropolitan area, but evaluates services rendered, identifies gaps and areas of weakness in that service and points out the next steps which might, hopefully, be taken to improve the over-all coverage and quality of the social services involved.

The sponsoring agencies named above, who appointed the New York Committee on Adoptions, provide an absolute guarantee of the high quality of the studies made and the process by which conclusions were reached. The leadership of the Committee under Mrs. Helen L. Buttenwieser, Chairman, and Miss

Dorothea P. Coe, Vice Chairman, brought together in a working team the law and social practice in one of the most difficult and delicate fields of social work practice.

Thirty-seven public and private agencies working in the adoption field joined in the undertaking. The scope of the inquiry was outlined by a Committee on Program and subcommittees were assigned to investigate the following areas: Casework and Financial Assistance for Unmarried Parents, Maternity Home Care for Unmarried Mothers, Adoption Services, Public Information about Adoption Services, Laws and Administrative Rulings Affecting Adoptions.

There emerges from this report recognition of the utter inadequacy of adoption statistics in both the public and private field and as a result our inability to plan wisely for the future. It is evident that there is need for expansion of authoritative public information service in this field. In the New York area there is great need for expansion of adoption and related services under non-sectarian and Protestant auspices. The opinion is expressed that if private philanthropy is unable to expand its services, far beyond the present possibilities, the public welfare agency must expand its services. Youth consultation service must be readily available. It is recommended that a central statistical and reporting service be established under accepted standards to determine the extent of need, and volume of services available in adoption agencies, maternity homes and hospitals.

In addition, there are specific recommendations addressed to the New York State Committee on Social Welfare and Relief of the Legislature, asking for certain revisions and clarification of the Social Welfare Law with particular reference to problems related to adoption.

While this publication is concerned primarily with the problems relating to adoption in New York City and State, the method of approach to the fact finding, analysis of data and the total co-operative effort which results in constructive conclusions and definite action, can serve as a guide to other states and is heartily recommended to all those seeking solution for these difficult problems.

ELLEN C. POTTER, M.D.

Deputy Commissioner for Welfare, New Jersey Department of Institutions and Agencies

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